

Werner S(Sammy) Leu

This is the fifteenth in a series of articles that we hope to publish for years to come. With this series we want to honor Service Members that served our great Nation. As I mentioned in the last article we need your help to honor these fine Americans. If you have someone you would like us to include, please help us research and develop articles. Our email address is mhamlegionpost113@gmail.com

This article is on Werner S (Sammy) Leu, who was one of the Gold Star Boys from the Mount Horeb Area that was killed during World War II. Sammy Leu was a first generation American. He was the ninth of ten children, five boys and five girls to Samuel and Lena Zaugg Leu. Sammy's parents were born in Rohrbach, Bern, Switzerland and immigrated to the United States in 1896 settling on a farm in Darlington, Wisconsin. They remained in the area all their lives. Sammy completed four years of high school in Darlington while working on the farm. He worked in a warehouse before joining the Army.

Werner S(Sammy) Leu enlisted in the Army on the 24th of January 1941 in Milwaukee. The future of his life like so many others, changed on his 24th birthday with the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Sammy trained at Fort Ord California, and later trained to become a bombardier at Almagordo New Mexico. While at Almagordo Sammy switched to the Army Air Corps.

Second Lieutenant Sammy Leu was then assigned to the 871st Bombardment Squadron, 497th Bombardment Group. The unit was equipped with B-29 Superfortresses, and the B-29 he was on was named the "Southern Belle". On 18 June 1945 he embarked to the Aitac Pacific Theatre.

The 497th Bombardment Group was stationed at Isley Field, Saipan, Mariana Islands from September 1944 until November 1945. The Group's mission was to engage in "Heavy" bombardment of Japan.

Three successful missions were completed- two of which resulted in unit citations. On July 19, 1945, the fourth mission for the 497 Bombardment Group was to Hitachi, a major industrial center. Thirty minutes into the flight the Southern Belle began to experience problems and was ditched into the ocean. Saipan was almost 1,500 miles (one way) from Hitachi. To increase bomb loads fuel was kept to a minimum, thus if any problems occurred, many planes were lost without a trace or went down awaiting help. The XXI Bomber Command had the mission to rescue these down aircraft. Planes deliberately put down followed a procedure called "Power Landing" in Army speak. Airmen called it "Ditching". A plane that lands on water can float for several hours if the water and weather conditions are favorable. It was quite a shock when a plane hit the water at 100 miles an hour. When the Southern Belle went down that day there were eleven crewmen on board. Five returned alive, one later died of wounds and five died right away including 1st Lieutenant Sammy Leu. The five that died: 2nd LT Marvin Reinhardt (missing in action) buried in OshKosh, WI, 2nd LT William E. McCarty(missing in action) wife lived in Morrowville, KS, SGT David C Studdard Jr. (killed in action) buried in Jasper, Alabama, CPL Robert J. Plotka(killed in action) buried

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in Milwaukee, WI, 1st LT Werner S Leu (killed in action) buried in Darlington, WI, 2nd LT Camile C. Callewaert(died of injuries) mother lived in Sturtevant, WI. The five that lived are: 1st LT Clyde A. Rodge, SGT Joseph P. McCormick, SGT Samuel S. Smith, CPL Earl H. Wilson, and CPL Donald F. Winslow.

Sammy Leu was buried in a temporary military cemetery, Army Cemetery number 1 plot 4 row 6 grave 1309, Saipan Island, and Marianas Islands.

Survivors included his wife Thresia, parents – Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Leu of Darlington and a sister Mrs. Hans Locker of Mount Horeb. His son, James Robert Leu was born on August 9th, 1944 and wasn't mentioned in the Mount Horeb Mail Article by name. Jim now lives in Florida and has two sons.

In a Wisconsin State Journal article in 1948, the headline read "Bodies were returned from temporary military cemeteries in the Pacific area aboard the Army transport "Delton Victory". Among them was 1st LT Sammy Leu. His remains were interred in the Union Grove Cemetery in Darlington, WI. Both families attended the services.

Sammy was awarded the Purple Heart.

Werner (Sammy) Leu married Thresia (Tessie) Sutter on December 30th, 1941 in Nevada. Tessie was also from a family of 10(3 boys and 7 girls). Tessi's parents, Leo and Theresa (Zeier) Sutter lived on a farm at 2230 S. HWY 78, Mount Horeb. After Sammy shipped out Tessie lived with her parents on the farm.

From family member - Barbara Sutter recollection - "Sammy's frequent letters home stopped and the family worried that something had happened but then thought that the mail could have been held up. Unfortunately, this was not the case and one day when Barbara was working inside the house, Tessie and her mother were working out in the garden, an automobile drove into the farm. It was a "We regret to inform you call" informing Tessi of the death of 1st LT Sammy Leu. Barbara said she will never forget the cries from outside that day."

Let us Never Forget that Freedom is NOT Free

Compiled by Dave Baumgartner and Nancy Sutter, submitted to Jerry Hook